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AFGHANISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Alfafa Sprouts Afghan Agribusiness

USAID is providing farmers with certified alfalfa seed and training in alfalfa production



Photo: USAID/ASAP

A farmer examines his crop of alfalfa grown with the support of USAID.

USAID's Accelerating Sustainable Agriculture Program is helping more than 800 small and medium-scale farmers to plant a total of almost 250 hectares of alfalfa on their farmland.

Afghanistan suffers from a shortage of fodder crops that is preventing the country's farmers from realizing the full potential of their livestock and improving their livelihoods. The solution may lie in the production of alfalfa which is widely recognized as an important crop for its resilience, yield, and use as high-protein and high-fiber feed for farm animals.

USAID is implementing a fodder program in various provinces throughout Afghanistan to increase production of alfalfa and to create agribusiness opportunities in the crop, and farmers are beginning to reap the benefits.

"I have already harvested my alfalfa field six to eight times this year, and it is still growing so I hope to have three more harvests as well," said Said Shah, a farmer from Charkh District of Logar Province in eastern Afghanistan.

Shah is just one of the many beneficiaries of the USAID project. In close coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, USAID is providing all of the farmers participating in the program with certified alfalfa seed and training on commercial alfalfa production. Farmers are trained on proper seedbed establishment, fertilization, irrigation, harvest, and post-harvest handling and processing.

USAID also provides the farmers with vouchers that allow them to purchase items like fertilizer through their local AgDepots (USAID-supported farm stores) at a reduced price. In return, the farmers are expected to keep their plots open for visiting group members to encourage others to grow the valuable crop. Farmers will also be provided with access to balers and pelletizers that will allow them to open up agribusinesses with their alfalfa crops.

"The farmers of Logar are very happy with the assistance," Shah said. "We hope to get more assistance and training so we can continue with development of our agriculture."

Through its Accelerating Sustainable Agriculture Program, USAID provides strategic support to public and private sectors nationwide with the overarching goals of improving agricultural production, increasing sales and exports, generating new jobs, and introducing modern agricultural technologies.